

THE
BACHELOR:

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES

BY

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I would not ~~wish~~ ^{love} her
Nor were he all desire ~~would~~ ^{could} wish, as far
As would the name of her sex be thought,
A man's wealth beyond what woman's pride could waste,
She should not cheat me of my freedom.

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THE

BACHELOR.

CHAP. I.

THE VENETIAN BLIND.

THE asylum which friendship afforded to Victor de Leyris, was as the quiet port to the shipwrecked mariner: there he forgot the tremendous storm which had indeed wrecked his hopes and fortune! Wisebý so much enjoyed his company, that a stranger would have thought all the obligation

was on his side. Lady Caroline, with all her faults and absurdities, expressed great kindness towards her brother's friend; and even had she refused to smile on him, which by the bye she did with less grace than most women, what rigour of her's would he not have thought amply recompensed by the pleasure of associating with Lady Mary, whose looks alone filled the imagination with dreams of happiness.

A new incident which now occurred tended to bring them still nearer together, by making them partners in a secret of the earl's. Wiseby having requested his friend to paint a por-

had not Lady Caroline promoted conversation. Lady Mary was so absent that Victor feared her brother would remark it, and was obliged to recal her attention several times. Wiseby went out early with his eldest sister, leaving the painter to proceed with his delightful task. Being again left alone with Lady Mary, they were equally anxious to speak of the extraordinary circumstance they had witnessed so unexpectedly. Delicacy withheld Victor, and timidity restrained Lady Mary: however, she first broke silence, and they eagerly expressed their astonishment and various suppositions concerning the young lady so carefully concealed. They

first imagined she was some distressed person who had come to implore his lordship for protection and relief. Wiseby was so good, so generous! But no, that could not be. They knew that for several years the entrance of this apartment had been forbidden to all by the master of the mansion; that during any absence of the earl's, this chamber was completely closed, and when he was at Wiseby Place he regularly passed an hour every morning in it, though nothing had ever transpired to afford any idea of his motive for so doing—"Not but that I have been at some pains to unravel the mystery," said Lady Mary, laughing, "for never was any of Bluebeard's

wives more curious than I have been 'on this subject ; bat my brother does not put 'any' constraint 'on us ; why then should we annoy him. It is neither just nor generous."

She then began again to speak of the young female, and lamented that she could not approach her, observing, " If she is unhappy, she might relate her sorrows ; and this would be some relief at least." In short, Victor and Lady Mary bewildered themselves with their various conjectures. This mysterious chamber, was to them as perplexing as the labyrinth of Crete.

During the rest of the day, they cast

more than one inquisitive look on Lord Wiseby: but the calm, unembarrassed tranquillity of his countenance and manner proved that there was at least nothing new in his situation, and made it still more difficult for observers to form any probable idea which could explain this strange affair. The next day dispelled a portion of the mystery in which it was enveloped.

Lady Mary had accompanied her brother and sister to the Arabian fabric, where they mounted their horses to take a ride. She declined joining them, on the plea of giving the count another sitting for her picture. She was lightly tripping towards the house,

when, on passing the windows of the chamber, the object of so many suppositions, the wind suddenly blew open one of the Venetian blinds, which had been ill closed on the inside, and on which her eye happened to be then fixed.

It has already been observed, that this apartment was on the ground-floor; but being elevated over the servants' offices, the windows were about six feet from the gravel walk, where Lady Mary stood, measuring the height with an anxious eye. "Dear me, I am not tall enough," she whispered to herself. She hesitated a moment; but curiosity was stronger than

prudence. 'After looking round, to see that no one observed her, she drew a garden chair, and stood on it. At first she only suffered her straw hat to appear above the bottom of the window—then her lovely forehead—then her sparkling blue eyes, and saw the lady whom she had caught a glimpse of on the preceding day. Her attitude was different, but the dress and appearance exactly the same.

Lady Mary was glad that the noise she had made in getting on the chair had not attracted the stranger's attention. She raised herself by little and little, emboldened on the one hand, and vexed on the other, when she per-

ceived that neither the motion of the
blinds, blown about by the wind, nor
the presence of a person at the win-
dow, could draw the unfortunate lady
from the profound reverie in which
she seemed to be plunged.

Lady Mary, after examining for
some minutes every thing that was to
be seen, replaced the blinds, jumped
from the chair, and returned to the
house.

CHAP. II.,

A DISCOVERY.

FOR near half an hour, Lady Mary had been seated opposite to Victor, who was proceeding in silence with his work, when, yielding to that imperious law which springs from benevolence, and causes us to take so much pleasure in communicating what we might conceal, the amiable sister of Lord Wiseby said with a smile: "It cannot be denied, Sir, that you possess abundance of discretion; you have been waiting for me this hour, and do

not even ask me why I have kept you so long."

Victor replied, that he thought he had no right to ask any such question. "No, certainly, when the secrets of another person are concerned," replied she, on the impulse of the moment. Victor was too delicate to appear to understand all the commendation of himself which this answer conveyed. "Nobody has told me what I know," continued she; "the apartment—the young woman——"

"What, my lady, have you stolen your brother's secret?"

“Stolen! No, I have stolen nothing: we are not forbidden to find; and for what I know I am indebted to chance.”

“Take care, my lady; you will soon be as close a reasoner as Lady Caroline.”

“You smile; I suppose you mean to say that I ought to say nothing. Well, I shall only tell you that the wind blew open the blinds of the apartment of which we were speaking.”

“And did you look in?”

“I did. In short, Sir, the female

about whom we formed so many conjectures, gives me no uneasiness now; and that's all you shall know."

"I shall not ask you to say any thing more. It is natural that you should have but little to relate of a person whom you could only have seen through a window that was shut."

"So you think I have but little to say about her! I was at the window at least ten minutes; so that I am pretty sure I have seen all that it is possible to see. I could discern very distinctly that the female is pretty, and that she is not dressed in the present fashion, but that she has a gown in

the French style, Inspruck gloves, and a Leghorn straw hat ; and if you, Sir, would chuse to make a drawing of her from my description, with all her accompaniments, place a table exactly opposite the window, and on the table a large medallion, representing in profile a young man in regimentals, who has just finished writing upon a pillar the name of ADRIANA."

"Adriana!" cried Victor, with a sudden start—"Adriana! Are you sure that was the name, my lady?"

"Yes, and the young man is dressed in a white uniform; turned up with red."

“ It can be no other ! ” exclaimed Victor with emotion—“ That is the uniform of my regiment, and the medallion is exactly like one which I painted for my sister, whose name is Adriana.”

“ O ho ! you have a sister called Adriana ? ” said Lady Mary, who was as ingenuous in the expression of her admiration, as she had been in manifesting her anxiety at Victor’s former exclamations. “ So you have a sister ? ”

“ To be sure, I have ; but,” added he, rising from his chair, “ let me beg

you to explain yourself: is Adriana here?"

"Make yourself easy," rejoined Lady Mary, laughing: "if she is here, she is but of marble, wood, or wax?"

Victor was at a loss what to make of this extraordinary explosion of mirth, when Lady Mary proceeded as follows: "Hear what I am going to say. As soon as I saw this young woman, whose appearance expresses grief, I tapped gently at the window, giving as tender a look as possible, that she might not be offended at my

intrusion. She never stirred. I tapped again, and again, but harder than at first, and still she did not move. You must allow that this figure is not a woman; for however unhappy a woman may be, still she has some curiosity; and besides, on a farther examination, I perceived that she had false eyes. As for her person, I could not discover precisely what it is made of.... Can this be your sister, now, do you think?"

This account communicated to Victor all the mirth of his fair companion. But the affection of both for Lord Wisby soon caused them to view this singular idea in a more

serious light, and they concluded that it originated in some sentiment that was deeply rooted in his heart. It was impossible, however, for them to conjecture how this medallion could have fallen into his hands ; and they had no kind of clue to the discovery of what had passed between Adriana and him. He had never mentioned her name in the presence of Lady Mary ; and the count, on his part, was sure that during his travels with Wiseby, he had never spoken to him of his sister ; in the first place, because the objects which daily presented themselves engaged his attention more than those which he had left behind ; and in the next, because Adriana was then so

trait of his sister, Victor and Lady Mary fixed themselves in the drawing room one morning before the hour of breakfast. After having arranged the colours, the ivory, and passed some time in placing the young lady, whom he could not seat exactly to his satisfaction, perhaps purposely prolonging the pleasure he felt in contemplating her so near and so freely, at length Victor was beginning his work, when the door of the mysterious apartment exactly opposite to them suddenly opened. They beheld Lord Wiseby coming slowly out of it; he probably did not think that any person was in the room, where he usually was the first. On perceiving them he started,

and turned hastily to close the door, but was not quick enough to prevent the count and Lady Mary from distinguishing in the shade at the back of the room a woman seated by a small table, with her head reclining on her hand. They both perceived the agitation of Wiseby; but as amiable intentions need not be communicated, without speaking they agreed to feign that they had seen nothing. The earl looked at them with an expression of distrust and uncertainty which their unembarrassed manner by degrees dispelled.

The breakfast would have been a more silent meal than it usually was,

young, that he could have no reason for making her the subject of conversation.

The return of Lord Wiseby and Lady Caroline terminated their conversation ; Lady Mary was divided between the fear of displeasing her brother, and a very lively curiosity to know the truth. She resolved to take some opportunity of mentioning Victor's sister.

The earl, who watched the progress of Victor's work, was leaning over the back of his chair, comparing the portrait with the original, when Lady Caroline said she thought there was a

great resemblance between Lady Mary and Lady Cowley. Wiseby, almost in a passion, exclaimed—"The baronet's lady is stiff, awkward, and silly; my dear little Mary is no more like her than you, Caroline, are like Queen Maud." -

"I may be like Lady Cowley," said Mary, modestly, "but so much the worse for the count's sister, for he says that I resemble *her*," added she, looking at Victor to intimate her intention.

"Like his sister!" said Wiseby—"What, Victor, have you a sister?"

Lady Caroline did not permit him to continue ; but instantly seizing the opportunity of a pause made by the earl, she addressed a thousand useless and odd questions to Victor, on his sister's education, wit, knowledge, talents, &c. &c. When she was exhausted, her brother, seating himself by Victor, said feelingly, but with the calm accent with which we speak of a person whom we do not know—"My dear friend, what became of your sister in the terrible revolution of your country ? I scarcely dare ask."

"She was so fortunate as to escape to a foreign land with her husband."

“ Oh ! your sister is married ? ” interrupted the inquisitive Caroline ;
“ of course to some man of rank and eminence—a man of talent too I presume ; pray what is his name ? ”

“ The Marquis d’Azemar,” answered Victor, with as much indifference as he could assume, and not daring to look at Wiseby, whilst his heart heaved with as ardent a curiosity as ever Lady Mary had felt. He supposed that he was setting fire to a mine, and the explosion instantly followed.

“ The Marquis d’Azemar ! ” exclaimed the earl, rising hastily with

great agitation.—“ Good God ! did he not reside in Bearn ? ”

“ Yes,” accompanied with an affirmative nod of the head, was the reply.

“ And are you the brother of the Marchioness d’Azemar ! ” repeated Wiseby. “ That is very strange !—very singular indeed ! ”

Lady Caroline declared that she could not see why her brother should be so exceedingly astonished.

“ Very singular indeed ! ” repeated Wiseby in a lower tone, as if wholly

engaged with his own thoughts. He then gave the count a look of still warmer attachment than before ; so that you would have thought them all at once united by some new bond of amity.

Lady Mary concluded from what she had heard, that the real Adriana and the figure she had seen, were one and the same person.

Some women would have smiled at the success of her little stratagem, which so many persons had unconsciously assisted ; but she recollected that if Victor had seen her smile, his second reflection would have been more to

~~the~~ advantage of her understanding
~~than~~ of her heart. She was satisfied
with the honour of the triumph, and
if she enjoyed it she kept it entirely to
herself.

CHAP. III.

ADVENTURES OF COUNT DE LEYRIS.

“ ’Tis very singular !” was all that Wiseby had said ; but a thousand ideas, attached to this exclamation, rushed at once into his mind ; and yet, had any one followed the earl to the different places which he was in the daily habit of visiting, he would have heard him utter no other words than—
“ ’Tis very singular.”

He knew not what had become of Madame d’Azemar : He had often

thought with painful anxiety on the dangers to which the French Revolution might have exposed her, who would have been sufficient to make him feel an interest in the fate of a whole nation ; but he had no means of gaining intelligence. He resolved to question Victor on his own adventures, not doubting that he should thus learn something of Adriana.

A day or two passed before Lord Wiseby could find an opportunity of asking for the information he desired ; for, notwithstanding his impatience, he wished to avoid showing the real motive of his inquiries. At length, however, one evening, they were without

company, and seated under the tulip-trees which ornamented the American savanna, he said to the count: "Victor, you have never related to me what you have seen or done since we parted from each other. Indeed the friendship we all feel for you deserves your confidence. I would not have asked or expected it, in the first days after our meeting; but now that you are one of our family, I must intreat you will satisfy our friendly curiosity. It is in port that seamen love to speak of storms. Do not omit any circumstance regarding yourself or your family."

Victor assured him, that his misfortunes were those of almost all his

countrymen; that he had no reason to believe his would be more interesting than those of others, especially to Lord Wiseby, whose benevolence to the ruined refugees had, of course, brought many a tale of sorrow to his knowledge. "Besides," added he, "I confess, my lord, that, generally speaking, I have no pleasure in making myself the theme of conversation." However, the friendly warmth with which they pressed him to satisfy their inquiries, soon prevailed. The two sisters, with their excellent brother, listened to the following recital, with all the interest which a sincere regard can inspire, aided by the secret motives from which neither was quite free :

“ My dear friend, you doubtless remember our parting before Gibraltar. The French and Spanish armies were obstinately besieging the place, whilst they ought to have attacked it by Jamaica. I really thought we should have taken root in the camp of St. Roche. Peace was at length concluded. I embarked at Cadiz, and again recommenced my travels, having obtained permission from the minister on whom I was dependent. I traversed Greece, the Archipelago, Turkey, and was at St. Petersburg when I heard of the disastrous events which were occurring in my unhappy country. I returned home just as the revolution was beginning. Its terrible convul-

sions have been felt afar ; but its secret causes are undiscovered even in France. Your government has been accused of having influenced our public disasters. It has been said that it was desirous of avenging the part which France had acted with regard to the American war, but which, for her own interest, she ought to have assisted Britain to terminate. Be this as it may, with us as in every country, and in every age, trivial causes produced great and terrible effects. The restless spirit which is inherent in our nation was awakened, and philosophy had an ally which it never will avow. Do not laugh if I name it to you. It is *lote*, which men could ne-

ver take pleasure in, because women cheated at it. Loto caused the drawing-rooms to be deserted; it was the parent of clubs; the clubs begot grumblers, who in their turn gave birth to libels; and you know the result.

“ I was eager to return home, and first proceeded to Paris, whence I intended to take a journey to the Pyrenees, to see a sister whom I dearly loved.”

Here Lord Wiseby began to manifest such eager attention, that Victor stopped short, on seeing Lady Maty smile. He turned away for fear of

being disconcerted, and then continued without looking towards the earl.

“ I was the more desirous of executing this plan, because I had not seen my sister since her marriage with the Marquis d’Azemar. My brother-in-law was then alive, and——”

“ What ! is your brother-in-law dead ? ” hastily exclaimed Wiseby. Victor could not help smiling ; and the earl, thinking it was on account of this second interruption, said no more.

“ Pray, proceed, Count Victor,” said Lady Mary, with as serious a look as she could assume : “ Do not omit

any details ; you know that we all love details in a story."

Victor resumed : " The marquis did not die till about two years after ; but I was not so fortunate as to be able to join him and my sister. With delight I had learned that she had grown very handsome—that her heart and mind were worthy of my love and admiration. I had not been a week in Paris without perceiving with anguish that my king was undone, my country ruined, by the strange and inconsistent conduct of its governors. At this time, a friend of mine, the Chevalier Lormeris, a naval officer, proposed to me to accompany him in a cruize—he had

obtained the command of a frigate, and was to sail immediately. I was glad to remove from the wretched country, where all I beheld was but the sad presage of all I dreaded, yet could not prevent: the offer therefore pleased me. I put off my journey to the Pyrenees until our return, and we embarked. For six months we remained at sea, meeting with different success, and various chances. The life of a sailor is a pleasant one, when he knows his profession, and has a good ship—he lives well—has no care—is out of the reach of malignity—he fights for his country—he commands, and is obeyed; there is even a pleasure in braving the fury of the tempests.

“ I have now to relate the event which would have marked the most delicious hour of my life, if my heart could acknowledge a happier day than the one in which I again met with you. Perhaps I have owed the greatest pleasures to that disposition of my mind, which enables me calmly to support adversity, and to meet dangers with a light heart. I will not make you sad with a description of my private sorrows—the loss of my fortune—the interruption of my military career, so brilliantly begun. I keep my compassion for those who remember all those chimeras with unavailing anguish. I do not solicit pity, for nature has given me spirits to bear

misfortune without repining. Memory sometimes offers me pictures of the happy past; and for the contrast I may breathe a sigh; but reason offers me her aid. I think on those who mourn their parents, friends, and children, torn from them by the same dreadful calamities, from which I have only lost what comparatively is nothing. I do not wish—I do not love to excite compassion, and truly I deserve it not. In a word, to delineate my character once for all, permit me to ask you, my lord, if you remember the road from Andernačh to Coblentz. The bank is narrow, the Rhine deep. I was travelling post along it at midnight—I took it into

my head to look through the window of my old German chariot, and saw the most frightful precipice that ever presented itself to the view of an awe-struck traveller. I hastily closed the glass, laid my head in the corner, and composed myself to sleep.

“ But to return to the circumstance of my life, in which I am sure that you will envy my good fortune.

“ I must first inform you, that I had an early and dear friend, from whom, at that time, I had been separated for three or four years. After experiencing many vicissitudes of fortune, he settled in Guadaloupe, with

a wife, two young children, and a negro, who was much attached to him—he was returning to France. The vessel in which he embarked was taken, and as she would have impeded the progress of the captors, she was scuttled and sunk. At a short distance from Bermuda, the ship, on board of which Edward Villars, my friend, had been removed, sprung a leak. Notwithstanding the entreaties of the passengers, the captain obstinately refused to put his prisoners on shore, but determined to carry them to England. The leak gained upon them in a most alarming degree—they were not more than half the voyage; and the crew could no longer suffice for the pumps and the working of the ship.

“ The captain had become greatly interested in the fate of Edward and his amiable family ; indeed his disposition and manners could not fail to endear him to any one who had an opportunity of frequently seeing him. The captain confessed privately to him, that their case was hopeless. Edward, summoning up all his fortitude, retired to the cabin with his wife and family, and said to them—‘ We must perish ! Let us embrace one another, and thank the Almighty that we are to die together. Oh ! my beloved, is it not merciful to spare us the pang of parting ? ’ He then spread his cloak on the floor, placed his wife and the two children upon it, and himself beside them ; then made a sign to the

faithful negro to come too, he closing the mantle over them all, and thus they awaited the fatal event.

“ At that moment the captain entered the cabin with tears in his eyes, and in extreme agitation. He told them, that it was by his fault they were doomed to perish, but there still was a possibility of saving them, if they lost not a moment; that his pilot, a man on whom he could depend, had just lowered the long boat, and that the rest of the crew were all asleep. He then desired Edward to follow him gently, with the rest of his family. Edward obtained permission to save his negro. They went on deck, and

in silence they descended one after the other into the boat, which was fastened by a cable to the ship.

“ Suddenly a voice exclaimed with the accent of despair—‘ Awake! shipmates, awake! we are lost: the captain is saving his own life, and leaving us to perish.’ In an instant twenty of the crew appeared on deck, and laid hold of the captain: ‘ It is not myself I am saving,’ answered he coolly; ‘ cut the cable, Jack.’

“ A single stroke severed the cable, and the boat glided through the waters, while the air was rent with the shrieks of despair. My friend and his

family had not proceeded more than two hundred fathoms, when a general scream filled them with horror, and announced that the generous captain and his wretched companions had gone to the bottom..

“ The pilot, two sailors, Edward, and his family, now found themselves in a small boat in the midst of the wide ocean. A single lateen sail, a compass, a barrel of water, a small quantity of biscuit and salt meat, courage and providence, were all they had to, enable them to buffet the waves, and reach Europe.

“ For three days and four nights

they had proceeded slowly in gloomy and silent despondence. The fourth night the deepening clouds announced to the wretched party a storm, from which, in all human probability, they never could have escaped. Edward suddenly exclaimed, ‘ Ah ! who is the insensible being that can sing in such a situation as ours ! ’

“ Each replied mournfully, that no one had been singing.

‘ Not any of you ! ’ said Edward joyfully ; ‘ then we are saved : a ship must be passing—I heard a voice singing—let us all call, at once.’

“ They did as he desired them.

“ Have I not reason to bless the chance, which, as I said, was the happiest of my life? It was I who was singing on the deck of our frigate—we were passing within a musket-shot when the unfortunate party called for help—I heard, and answered them—they redoubled their cries—we hailed them with the speaking-trumpet. The helmsman, directed by their voices, soon came up to their boat, and they were all got on board. A man passed into my care a woman and two children, then leaped after, and in a transport of gratitude threw himself into my arms.—it was Edward Vilers, the friend of my youth—the companion of my early studies, whom I embraced!

“ The pilot, the sailors, the negro, were scarcely hoisted on board, before the wind grew more violent, the billows heaved high, and a heavy squall assailed us: all the poor wanderers were saved—the tempest must infallibly have overwhelmed them——”

Wiseby here interrupted Victor, entreating him to suspend his recital, for it really affected Lady Mary to tears; and he felt a great disposition to play the woman, and weep too.

“ How, brother !” said Lady Caroline, “ do men weep? The narrative of Count Victor is certainly interesting, but it does not call a single tear into my eyes.”

Wiseby, without answering her, took Victor's hand, which he heartily shook, while his look expressed the feeling excellence of a soul truly alive to every motion of sensibility. "How happy you must have been," said he. "Has Providence afforded you many such chances? Truly you are right to think yourself most favoured. There are, indeed, delicious moments in the life of man—let us then never repine to find his lot so chequered. But continue, my dear friend—I condemn myself for thus interrupting you."

"We returned to France. I confess that, notwithstanding my forebodings, I was surprised at the state

in which I found my unhappy country
—indulging in the delirious excesses
of its terrible saturnalia, and covered
with scaffolds. Such of my friends as
had not fled, were daily perishing.
But I will spare you the description:
suffice it, that all pity for myself, all
thought of my ruined fortunes, were
lost in regret for the general calamity
—the excess of its horrors united all
the sufferers in the common cause.

“ I determined to go into Lower Na-
varre to ascertain the situation of my
sister and her husband ; hoping that,
in a province so distant from the vol-
cano, I should find some peace ; but
it had more than one crater. Neither

the depths of valleys, nor the summits of mountains, were secure from its fury.

“Disguised in the dress of a common soldier, and under a fictitious name, I wandered on foot among those mountains, and arrived at the spot where a year before stood the castle of Azemar. A stranger would have supposed that half a century had passed over the ruins; yet, even amongst them, there was a trace of my beloved Adriana. Garden flowers and shrubs, which she had cultivated, disputed the ground with the thistle and the steril black-thorn, which sprung up in every part. The courts, the gardens—in

short, all was desolate. I found only an old man seated under a tree, which appeared to have been scathed by lightning. The sight of me made him start—it was, as he afterwards told me, the terror which my dress created. I presently recollected him: it was the steward, the oldest servant of the Marquis d’Azemar. I called him by his name—the old man looked at me, and his eyes soon overflowed. ‘What, Count Victor! can it be you? Alas! is it possible? Ah! you have been the cause of great anxiety to my good master and my dear lady.’ I asked what had become of them: I was forced to listen to numberless details, which, although they greatly interested

me, I would willingly have dispensed with, till my eager enquiry had been satisfied ; and then he told me that my sister, with her husband, had escaped into Spain.

“ Old Dumont continued : ‘ Is it not a pity to see this beautiful castle in so deplorable a condition ? By virtue of a decree, they first came and destroyed the towers : after the departure of my lord the marquis, they took possession of it for government, as they said—nobody yet has been so impudent as to buy it ; but not a day passes, that they don’t come and steal away something. First they took the lead to make bullets ; then they carried off the strong

doors, with a pretext of putting them to a prison; and for two whole months they were seeking saltpetre, that they might have an opportunity of drinking all the fine foreign wines and liqueurs. He added, that the estate of Leyris, from which I take my name, had been likewise laid waste; and from him I learnt the death of my eldest brother, the Marquis de Ccsannes, who died in Germany. The difference of our ages had constantly kept us asunder; but though I knew very little of him, still I could not but deeply regret his loss.

“ The narrative of Dumont, of course, greatly effected me. ‘ See,’

continued the good man, ‘ these flowers and shrubs, the only things which have not tempted their rapacity: the marchioness was very fond of them—for her sake I water and take care of them, or rather keep them from dying. This state of things cannot last: she will return some day; and if I should even be no more, yet when she sees her flowers, she will say—Poor Dumont thought of me!’

“ I endeavoured to console the old man, and to encourage in him a hope of a speedy alteration, which I did not entertain myself: ”

“ ‘ Thank you, sir,’ said he; ‘ but

when I speak of the future, it is not for myself. My dear master and mistress are gone, and I shall not live to see their return. Look, sir, at this aged tree : when I was young, it flourished ; but now, the lightning has fallen on it—it is an image of me---I shall not survive it.’

“ When Dumont ceased to speak, I asked him how long the marquis and my sister had been in Spain, and in what town they lived. The old man expressed great surprise that I should be unacquainted with these circumstances. Then a ray of joy beamed on his venerable countenance; as he said—
‘ It was my lady who saved my lord

the marquis; I cannot think of it without weeping, and yet I love to think of it.'

"He then related to me that the marquis had been conveyed to prison; that the marchioness had insisted on accompanying him; that he (Dumont), by dint of intreaties, and perhaps because his advanced age precluded all possibility of suspecting him, had obtained permission to see them. He then made another digression---told me, that, though old, he was no coward, and that he was at Prague with my lord the marquis. He did not give me the history of the siege, but I was not let off without

the retreat. ‘ In short,’ continued he, ‘ I proposed they should attempt to escape.’

“ The life of the marquis was threatened : Adriana in vain endeavoured to obtain her husband’s acquittal—their persecutors had no commiseration but for her ; and my brother-in-law had no means of saving himself but by flight. Adriana, from her prison, directed all the preparations. ‘ They did escape,’ continued Dumont, ‘ one very dark night. I was in waiting without, and conducted them to a place of safety, where I had prepared a disguise for the marquis :—a long brown great coat, a knotted stick, a tin cup

hanging to the button-hole of his coat. Any body would have taken him for an old blind man—the marchioness led him, and said he was her father: I wish you had seen how pretty she looked when dressed like one of our country girls. They had not far to go before they reached the frontiers; but there are several post-towns to pass through, if you keep the high road, and it was the safest way, because it was liable to excite the least suspicion. Providence conducted them in safety, and all who met them cried—“God bless you!”

Here Wiseby was no longer able to repress his enthusiasm, and exclaimed:

“ *This conduct, Victor, is indeed worthy of your sister.*” In this description I recognize the heart and excellent nature of the amiable Marchioness d’Azemar.”

Victor continued: “ I passed several days with Dumont. We continually spoke of the same persons---of the same things: one spirit animated both. He informed me that the marquis had long foreseen the dreadful end of our revolution, and had placed a considerable sum in foreign banks, and that my sister’s jewels, which were very valuable, were likewise saved. It was a great consolation for me to know that persons so dear to my heart

were in safety and in affluence. I was rejoicing at these comparatively happy circumstances, with their faithful servant, when a letter reached Dumont from Barcelona, informing him of my brother-in-law's death, and that Adriana had embarked for Italy.

“ I have but little more to add ; you know all that has befallen me in England : the difficulties and dangers which led me hither, shall no longer be dwelt on with regret since they have been the means of re-uniting me to a friend like you.”

It is sometimes amusing to observe a philosopher, when we touch the cord

to which his heart is attuned. Hurried away by the secret impulse which swayed his mind, Wiseby eagerly asked why Victor had not followed his sister; how he could forget that she had no other protector, since the Marquis d'Azemar was no more; and thus leave her, alone, in a strange land, without a friend to advise or to console her. Victor thanked the good earl for the warmth with which he expressed his interest for Adriana—“The dearest hope of my heart,” said he, “would have been fulfilled, could I have found out my sister. The old steward could afford me no other information, to discover her retreat, than the name of her correspon-

dent at Barcelona ; but at this time I experienced the fate now common to every innocent, upright, or eminent person in France—I was immured in a prison where I remained five weary months. On recovering my liberty, my first thought was Adriana ; the first wish of my heart was to see her. I went again to Dumont ; but all communication between them had ceased, in consequence of the death of the Spanish correspondent. I could only learn that my sister had quitted Venice ; that, often forced to change her abode, she shared the state of exile and proscription of the unfortunate French emigrants, who were obliged to fly before the armies of their

country. She had found it necessary even to change her name. But Dumont was quite sure she was free from all pecuniary distress; he knew likewise that she had met in Italy with a respectable lady of the d'Azemar family, who had associated Adriana in her fate, and loved her as her child. Thus relieved from my worst fears for my sister, I had nothing more to do than to follow my duty, and the example of all my friends. I was wounded towards the conclusion of the campaign. About this time Dumont, whom, previous to my leaving France, I had requested not to fail to communicate any intelligence he might obtain of her, and at the same time pointing out

a sure channel by which it might be transmitted, wrote to me that my sister was at Lausanne, and was endeavouring to obtain permission to return home. I immediately wrote to Switzérland ; but all my endeavours to discover any traces of her have been unsuccessful. It may be that she has accomplished her intentions of going back to France, notwithstanding all the disapprobation of such a plan, which my letters contained, or perhaps before she could receive them. It is possible that Dumont may be no more ; in short, every channel of communication between me and Adriana is completely intercepted, as you may suppose to my very great sorrow."

This explanation certainly absolved the Count de Leyris from the charge of neglect towards his sister; but it was calculated to awaken all the anxiety Lord Wiseby had felt for her. The uncertainty of her fate occupied his mind, and interested his heart more than if he had again seen her blooming and lovely as when they parted.

It was now impossible for Wiseby to dissemble any longer that he knew Adriana; but he had the most distant idea that he was betraying the dearest secret of his heart by admitting that he had enjoyed the pleasure of her company for two months, at Pampeluna and Barcelona. In this

acknowledgement, he actually acquainted Victor and Lady Mary with what they were before ignorant of. He took care to say nothing about the mysterious figure and its identity with the marchioness; that is, merely what they knew just as well as himself.

CHAP. IV.

ANOTHER STEP.

THERE is not a beautiful or noble chimera which a generous heart may not cherish in the absence of a beloved object. Anxiety is the food of love. Wiseby's anxiety was proportionate to his passion ; and could he dissemble to himself that he loved ? What was the tender and constant remembrance of Adriana, which he had fondly retained, but love ? and this love he thought he might indulge without incurring any risk. With a palpitating

heart he learned that she was free ; his varying countenance proclaimed the emotion which this intelligence excited ; yet he would not acknowledge to himself this involuntary agitation. Thus it is that lovers and children expose themselves to perils, which they are too silly or too infatuated to believe. The idea of her being at liberty, however, gave him pleasure ; but he did not examine the motives of the various emotions with which he thought of her : it was for her sake, for her's alone, that he occupied himself about her fate ; at least so he endeavoured to persuade himself. It was very improbable that he should ever again behold Adriana ; he fancied that he did not wish to see her ; at

the same time he dwelt with delight on the recollection that she was the sister of Victor de Leyris; and never failed, when opportunity offered, to mention how much he relied on the promise, that Victor would never leave him. Sometimes, indeed, he thought that if Adriana was again offered to his view; if the woman of five and twenty were to be as enchanting as the girl of fifteen, there might be some danger; but he reasoned that, as he should foresee the snare, he certainly might avoid it. The tenderness he felt for Adriana—his anxiety to learn her fate—the ardent wish to know that she was happy; all these occupations of his mind might be suspicious; but

he was to see her no more; nay, he *would* not see her again: this he often repeated, as if he wished to persuade himself so, and then he gave his heart freely up to the delight of thinking of her, of interesting himself in her destiny with all the generosity of his soul, with all the security of his heart. While he had supposed himself surrounded by strangers to Adriana, one hour in the day devoted to the secret worship of her image, seemed sufficient for his regret; but now, that in her best friend he sees the brother of her whom he loves, it is not empty regret that he wishes to cherish in the solitude of his heart; it is a real happiness that he longs to taste, mingling

her dear name with the conversations of friendship.

Such was the disposition of Lord Wiseby's mind, when Monsieur and Madame Dumenil, with their daughter Adela, called at Wiseby Place. At length, fortune (whose caprice it sometimes is to remedy the ills she has inflicted) had ceased to persecute this interesting family. A fortunate event, still unknown at the earl's, had changed their circumstances. The beneficent friendship of the amiable Mary would have been considered a presage in the days of superstition.

After the usual compliments, Mon-

sieur Dumenil said :—“ My lord, I thought it my duty to come with my family, that we might have the honour of thanking you for all you have so kindly done to serve us. Your lordship is rich, and you enjoy good health : so much the better for those who are in distress ; but really you must seek them at a distance from Wiseby Place : in this neighbourhood it would be vain to look for them. ‘The poor are not thankless, for the word gratitude is in every mouth ; and truly it is here,’” continued the old man, clapping his hand on his heart, “ here, where your image is too deeply engraven to be ever erased.”

The praises of an old man are always grateful; — Wiseby was flattered. — “ Neighbour,” he replied, “ I do not deserve your encomiums, it is to my sister Mary I owe the pleasure of your acquaintance. It has not even been in my power to assist you with my talents, for I do not know how to hold a pencil. The drawings, which you received with so much pleasure, are the work of my friend here, the Count Victor de Leyris.”

The earl did not expect that from thus establishing every one in his proper right, he should be recompensed by the pleasure of hearing the name of Adriana. Adela was certainly a love-

ly: young woman, but Wiseby might have seen her a hundred times before she would have appeared so lovely to him as at this moment; when holding the hand of Lady Mary, and directing towards Victor the most amiable smile, she said—"Monsieur de Leyris, the gratitude we owe you is not a burden to us; and I trust you will not regret the time you have spent to serve us, when you know whom you have obliged. You are, if I am not mistaken, the brother of the Marchioness d'Azemar. Perhaps your amiable sister will assist in expressing our acknowledgments." At these words the eyes of Wiseby involuntarily turned towards

the door, as if he expected to see Adriana enter.

“ Has my sister the honour of being known to you ? ” asked Victor.

“ Know Madame d’Azemar ! ” hastily interrupted Mr. Dunenil ; “ ask us rather if my wife is not always speaking of her ; if I do not doat on her, notwithstanding my grey hairs ; if my grand children do not even now cry after her ? — Is she not the friend, the sister of Adela ? — Is she not our daughter ? — Madame d’Azemar ! ... That was not her name for any but us,” added the old gentleman in a

lower voice and a confidential tone ;
“ to every body else at Lausanne she
was Madame Durand ; that you know
is a custom which most people of rank,
travelling abroad, have adopted, of
taking names which do not belong to
them ; though, to say the truth, I
can't exactly see for what purpose.”

After this little digression, Mr. Dumenil continued :—“ Is it possible that I
have the happiness to see the brother
of the Marchioness d'Azemar ! Yes,
Monsieur de Leyris, you are her
brother, for you are benevolent and
attentive like herself ; you do not des-
pise old age ; and truly, now I look
again, you are like the marchioness :
don't you think, Madame Dumenil,

there is some resemblance? Sir, sir, I give you joy of it with all my heart, and for her sake we must be friends."

Madame Dumenil likewise expressed her high sense of all the obligations they had received. It was she who informed Victor, and at the same time Lord Wiseby, whose whole soul seemed absorbed in this conversation, that six months before she had left Adriana in Switzerland, preparing to return to France, in company with an aunt whom she would not abandon; but at the time the Dumenil family quitted Lausanne, this old lady had just fallen ill so that it was still un-

certain if their design had been carried into execution.

Madame Dumenil had addressed this explanation to Victor. She continued, turning towards Lord Wiseby: "When we came to live at the village of Burton, where we now reside, I did not imagine we had the honour of knowing your lordship; but we soon learned that you were no stranger to us." The earl enquired who it was that had spoken of him.

"Madame d'Azemar!" answered Adela. One would think that a pleasing name acquires additional interest when pronounced by a pretty mouth.

The happy Wiseby, with secret transport and mute attention, awaited what Adela had farther to say. She continued. “When we communicated to Madame d’Azemar our intention of going to England, she said to us, with all the graceful vivacity which never abandons her—‘How happy you are to be going to that delightful country! I have an acquaintance there—a friend, whose name is Lord Milford. Perhaps you may meet with him; indeed you are sure to do should you ever want him!’ Shall I repeat, my lord, all that Madame d’Azemar said? I am afraid I shall put your modesty to the proof.” Lady Mary replied instead of her brother, and it is easy to per-

ceive whether he was displeased at her interference.

“ My dear Madame de Rostange,” said she, “ pray do not spare my brother. I shall be extremely glad to learn what Count Victor’s sister thinks of him.”

“ You shall then,” replied Adela, mildly ; “ but remember, my lord, that the words are Madame d’Azemar’s :— ‘ He was very amiable,’ she said, ‘ at the time I knew him ; I have heard it asserted that Englishmen are not so agreeable at home as when they are abroad.’ ”

“ ’Tis not true ! ” abruptly cried

M. Dumenil, rising, “at least, I’ll answer for it, my lord, that you are an exception to the rule.” ‘The old gentleman again seated himself, and Wiseby merely thanked him by a motion of the head, anxious lest he should lose a word of what Adela had yet to say. She thus proceeded:—“I wish (you must still imagine that it is Madame d’Azemar who is speaking) you may chance to meet with him. Now Adela,’ she continued, ‘if you should be so fortunate, write me some intelligence of him. When I was a giddy girl, I used to call him *my servant*: indeed I should grieve to know he had quite forgotten me. If that should not be the case, if you should

discover that I am honoured with a portion of his regrets, you may tell him that Adriana has sometimes thought of Milford.' 'These, my lord, were the exact words of Madame d'Azemar.'

Wiseby was still listening to the last vibrations of Adriana's name, which reverberated in his heart. He awoke from this delicious reverie in the midst of a long discourse from Mr. Dumetil, who, happily, was too full of his subject to perceive that he spoke unheeded. He had risen, and standing opposite Lord Wiseby, he was saying: "Your lordship must allow that no one could guess at once that the Earl of Wiseby was the Lord Milford of

our amiable Marchioness d'Azemar—why, she knew no more about it than we did. It is a difficult thing for strangers to make themselves acquainted with your English titles, which you change so often, that we may hear our best friend mentioned, and take him for a stranger. But, before I leave you, I must inform your lordship of an event which, indeed, we did not expect. It is a true saying, that numerous families prosper. Thank God! I have no need to pray for an increase, for we have plenty of great relations. An uncle, whom I had almost forgotten, is dead at Martinico, and has left me all his possessions; so that our family will no longer burden

your lordship, though we can never cease to be grateful for the obligations we have received from you."

Lady Mary eagerly congratulated them. Wiseby offered any service he might be able to render them in arranging their affairs, equipping themselves for a voyage to the West Indies. Both Madame Dumenil and her daughter replied, that they would never quit their adopted country, unless there was a possibility of a peaceful return to their native land; that they should continue to reside at Burton, and would not change the neighbourhood of Wiseby Place for the first square in London.

Wiseby pressed them to repeat their visits frequently ; but it was more particularly to Adela that he addressed himself. One reigning sentiment—one cherished idea, imperceptibly governs the looks—the steps of the most polite as well as of the wisest man. Adela was to Wiseby like the magnetic mountain in the Arabian Nights. What gratitude he felt for this young lady ! From her he had learned that Adriana remembered him—he could enjoy without danger the delight, the transport, of knowing it. Wiseby was very happy, but his heart was very sick--- Adriana remembered him !

CHAP. V.

PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

A FEW days after the visit of the Dumenil family at Wiseby Place, the earl was engaged in his accustomed occupations, Lady Mary and Victor were in the drawing-room, and Lady Caroline in her habit, a whip in hand, was preparing to take a ride. She paced the room for awhile, seeming occupied by some extraordinary project: she suddenly rang the bell, and gave orders that her groom should

walk the horses, for she had changed her mind, and should not go abroad.

Now began one of the most extraordinary conversations that Victor had heard in all his life. After a moment's silence, Lady Caroline said :—

“ My brother has very unaccountable ideas—don't you think so, Count Victor ?” and without waiting for his answer, she added : “ His opinions on matrimony, for instance, are destitute of common sense. I have reflected on the subject, and have fixed my ideas in a much more reasonable manner. Do you know that my brother has a very great regard for you ?”

Victor replied by a respectful bow. She continued: "I am resolved he shall give you a real proof of his friendship: he shall give you one of his sisters in marriage."

Astonishment at such an opening was expressed in Victor's countenance, yet he awaited eagerly what was to follow. Lady Mary, quite speechless, felt her heart throb, as she fancied her sister had guessed the secret inclination which she had confessed to herself, which, perhaps, she did not wish concealed from De Leyris; but Lady Caroline was not the interpreter she would have chosen. She rose to leave the room. "Stay, Mary," said her

sister, " you are welcome to hear what I have to say."

Again addressing Victor, she thus continued: " You are the friend of my brother, but you do not know me. I shall give you a description of my character in a few words: I have some instruction, my judgment is pretty sound, and I particularly pique myself on my penetration. Ordinary women, with ridiculous affectation, conceal their secret sentiments, and the preference which a man receives from them: my disposition is frank, and I speak my mind at once."

Lady Mary breathed more freely:

she perceived her sister was speaking on her own account, and the rivalry did not alarm her.

“ My brother loves you,” resumed Lady Caroline: “ Lady Mary and myself likewise share the warm sentiments of attachment which he bears you; your easy temper, your perfect good-nature, deserve our friendship. I can truly add, that of all the men who have been proposed to me, I see only you who quite suit me for a husband.”

De Leyris, for the last five minutes, had foreseen this conclusion; but was by no means tempted to reply. Lady Caroline did not ask for an answer, but continued:—

“ I have seen enough of you to be convinced of this. It is usual for women to fancy the men, whom they marry, perfectly faultless. I have observed before, that my disposition is frankness itself—I will not fail to point out any thing that may displease me in you. You possess good sense as well as myself: you cannot pretend to be as perfect as a woman whose faults a habit of observation and reflection naturally corrects—that is to say, if she has any; and as to myself, I must confess I never knew that I had.”

Lady Mary eyed Victor with a look of kindness, as if to beseech his indulgence and compassion for the inge-

shows vanity of her sister, who, at length, terminated her extraordinary panegyric, by modestly saying :—

“ I have some qualities, which others commend—of these I never speak. I can hate, as I can love; I serve my friends, as I injure my enemies; I am to be depended on; I have a sense of what is right; I am generous; I have the innate love of all that is great or good; and I confess that I am well pleased with myself for having conceived the idea of offering you a share of a large fortune, and of making you ample amends, by my own choice, for all the persecutions of fate, and all the disasters you have endured.”

Victor had felt extremely awkward during the whole of this harangue, in which there was not a sentiment but what was false, ill-timed, and calculated to offend.

“ My lady,” replied he coldly, and with dignity; “ permit me to reply only to your confidence, and to observe that you have given me the highest mark of esteem I can possibly receive.”

Lady Mary, to keep herself in countenance, held before her a volume of Racine, opened at random.

“ It appears to me,” said she timid-

ly, without raising her eyes from the book, "it appears to me that, when we love a person who has been unfortunate, it is much easier to offer a fortune than to persuade him to accept it."

"I dare say, Lady Mary," rejoined her sister, "I dare say those may be your sentiments; you have been brought up with such narrow ideas, that you never would have any thing to say for yourself; you would always be afraid of expressing your thoughts."

A vague hope made Victor attentive to catch the answer of Lady Mary: she again cast her eyes on the book,

and as if impelled by a secret sentiment, an irresistible emotion, she instantly repeated this line of the poet :

“ L’amour est-il muet, ou n’a-t-il qu’une lan-
guage* ? ”

and at the same instant her eyes, fixed on Victor’s, completed the expression which her lips refused to utter. What a flattering tale that look revealed ! What avowal could have been so explicit ?

The happy Victor, in his first transport, saw—heard nothing but the lovely Mary. In his delirium he had

* “ Is love then dumb, or has it but one lan-
guage ? ”

nearly fallen at her feet, when the voice of Lady Caroline awoke him from the delightful dream.

“ You did not expect,” said her ladyship, “ the advantages which I offer you : my proposal proves that I do nothing like other people ; but I teach you to know me : you are silent : I have given you an example of sincerity—do not conceal your gratitude. You accept my proposal ? ”

It is impossible to describe the embarrassment of de Leyris in so delicate a situation. He was still silent. Lady Mary enjoyed this interval. Lady Caroline was on the point of feeling

surprised at it, when very opportunely a servant entered the room, to say the earl was mounting his horse. The count had agreed to accompany him in his ride to see a new invented machine for sowing grain. Lady Caroline herself would not have made her brother wait, for he never made any one wait for him. Victor rose, in his heart blessing agricultural inventions, industry, and, above all the necessity of being punctual with methodical friends.

This unforeseen deliverance restored to him so much presence of mind, that he was enabled to make an evasive reply, which Lady Caroline might interpret to the gratification of her va-

nity and her views; but his fervent glance as he pressed Lady Mary's hand, and said "Farewel!" was sufficiently expressive to satisfy her that thanks may convey a refusal.

Lady Caroline thought herself so very superior to her unassuming sister, that a possibility of their being compared never entered her imagination—much less could she fear her inspiring a preference. The moment they were left alone, she thus addressed her sister: "Don't you think I have done right, Mary, in offering my hand and fortune to the Count de Leyris? My brother is his friend: on his report we may rely as to the birth and

former condition of this foreigner. He is poor: every one speaks of my brother's generous conduct towards him; but after this event, I think I shall totally eclipse him."

Lady Mary, greatly agitated, looked at her sister, and said: "Do you really love my brother's friend?"

The smile with which Lady Caroline replied, expressed the pity she felt for her sister, who was so far from possessing that independent philosophy which reduces all affections to their real value. "Love! love! my poor child! we may love the sciences, the arts, letters—we may love the world,

play, horses, racing.* We marry because it is the custom: social habits have so decreed: we must take a husband; but where is the necessity of loving? It is the weakness of romantic girls, which great minds despise."

"Oh! my dear Caroline," cried Lady Mary, eagerly—"how much you delight me by this way of thinking!" she added, with as much timidity as candour. "I feared that you could not be happy—that you could not live without the Count de Leyris; but since it is only a husband you wish for, with your person, education, and fortune, you may certainly chuse out of all the three kingdoms."

“What do you mean, child?” Are you mad?”

“Oh, I am happy, dear sister—quite happy that it is so. Then my brother’s friend is neither more nor less indifferent to you than any of those gentlemen whom you say you have refused?”

“Certainly what is the meaning of all this?”

“Oh, sister, that word has restored peace, hope—I had almost said happiness. I ought to repay the pleasure you afford me by a full confession of my dearest secret. He who is so in-

different to you—who is so good, so amiable so unfortunate!—Victor, whom my brother so dearly loves!—to be loved by him, to be united to him—to be happy with him—is the dream of felicity which I have dwelt on till it has become the warmest wish, the fondest hope—the darling object of my secret prayers.”

Lady Caroline listened with great gravity to this effusion. It was the first time Lady Mary had given words to the subject which had occupied every thought for several months, and now it burst at once from her lips with all the warmth which youth, imagination, and the country had given to her

feelings. After a moment's silence, Lady Caroline said: "My dear girl, you have the imagination of a French woman: so far only you might be suited to the count: but you are pursuing a chimera. You are not now to learn that our brother has faults as well as the rest of mankind; but he is obstinate in his prejudices, and quite as unwilling to suffer us to marry as to take a wife himself. For my part, I could brave his displeasure; but nature has not given you strength of mind to place you above certain prejudices, consecrated by habit, yet condemned by reason. Even were it otherwise, it would be of no avail in the present circumstances. You are the

sport of your own error : it is not you that Victor loves. 'I will not name her he prefers ; but a little reflection will convince you that it is perfectly natural for man to prize in a woman those qualities and tastes which coincide with his own. Men are fond of horses, sporting, the sciences : if they are so fortunate as to meet in a woman a companion who can equal, or perhaps surpass them in these exercises and noble avocations, they must prefer her to those insignificant females who are mere domestic drudges, who only understand a little painting, music, embroidery, but in all important and serious conversation can only listen, and be silent. If you, my dear

Mary, have not the superior qualities which I possess, it is not your fault, but that of the kind of education which you have received. I should be just the same, if by persevering study and care I had not corrected and improved the talents conferred on me by nature.

“ I cannot conceal from you that all de Leyris’s attentions are directed to me. It is inconceivable that you should not have seen it already. But no, your error fascinates you; and then a little vanity—you have your share as well as other people; the human heart is thus moulded.

“ When Count Victor is near you, he looks on whilst you work, or you look over him whilst he paints. What good does that do? When I appear, I directly draw him into conversation on some important discovery, on some interesting experiment: I speak—he listens; and when we part, he leaves me equally delighted and instructed. If he then draws near you, it is plain that politeness is the inducement.

“ I would willingly console you, my dear Mary; but I must advise you to give up all thoughts of Count Victor. I foresee that he must necessarily be my husband: he must—he will. Were I

to permit him to refuse me, he has not the power.”

Thus spoke Lady Caroline. The two sisters parted not the best satisfied with each other, but both in good humour with themselves ; Lady Caroline, from the high opinion she entertained of herself ; Lady Mary, from the conviction that if any one mistook Victor's secret, it was not she.

CHAP. VI.

▲ HURRICANE.

CONFORMABLY to his sentiments concerning marriage, Lord Wiseby would unquestionably have supposed Victor to have been turned adrift between two cliffs, had he been acquainted with his real situation, and would have felt himself greatly perplexed respecting the measures he ought to pursue. Not that he had not actually divined the sentiments of his two sisters with regard to his friend : as for the eldest, he was confident that her

conduct would at all events excite his astonishment, 'if not his indignation ; and as for his gentle sister Mary, he thought her too shy to solicit a consent which she was conscious she would not obtain. In this state of affairs, Wiseby adopted a resolution to remain neutral. He knew that if Lady Mary only consulted the sentiments of her own heart, Victor would not chuse to do otherwise than consult his delicacy. As for Lady Caroline, he was perfectly acquainted with her character : far from consulting any body, she was ready upon all occasions to dictate to others.

We may easily imagine that, in the

height of her infatuation, this vain woman would naturally expect that the strange proposition we have already noticed would be accompanied with an effusion of grateful and solemn protestations. In vain did she endeavour to impute the obstinate silence of Victor to respect and timidity: the veil insensibly fell from her eyes, and she became apprehensive that she was mistaken for the first time in her life. The gusts of vanity arose within her breast, like the forerunners of a hurricane which ruffles the ocean before it rages in all its fury. She felt the secret workings of mortification, an indelible humiliation: what she had previously mistaken

for sympathy was now metamorphosed into scorn. She displayed by turns a cold reserve towards Victor, indifference towards Lady Mary, and peevishness towards her brother. Her sister stood in awe of her ; Victor avoided her ; but Wiseby watched her motions with jealous vigilance. The very persons who were desirous to converse together could now do nothing more than exchange stolen glances. Lady Caroline never failed to obtrude herself upon their company, and was always an unbidden guest. Such a critical posture of affairs could not be of long duration.

Thus circumstanced, Victor was

acquainted by a letter, from London, that an old friend of his family was just arrived from the continent; whence he very rationally concluded, that he might receive some intelligence concerning his sister through this medium. He embraced a resolution to repair instantly to this gentleman, and found no difficulty in obtaining the consent of Wiseby, however the latter might be grieved at the sudden departure of his friend. He could only obtain leave of absence for three days, and a promise was extorted from him to return on the fourth, which he readily stipulated.

This circumstance suggested the

idea to his mind of discharging, on the present occasion, his moral obligations both to Lord Wiseby and to himself. He was sensible that he was not justified in suffering Lady Caroline to lie under a mistake. What he had seen and heard impressed him with a pleasing conviction of the predilection which Lady Mary had manifested towards him; but he did not chuse to abuse the generosity of her sentiments. He resolved therefore to write severally to these two sisters; in the first instance, in order to make an apology to the one for his non-acceptance of her proposals, and secondly with the laudable design of pleading against himself, against his love, and the

fondest wishes of his heart. He pondered long, weighed every expression with scrupulous nicety, sought to qualify the severity of his refusal and the vehemence of his transports; and having concluded and sealed up both his letters, he delivered them to a servant of the family, took his leave of Wiseby, and set out on horseback,

With the self-complacency of a man who has just performed a meritorious action, he congratulated himself on having found this opportunity of explaining his sentiments to the sisters of his worthy friend. On that very evening, Lady Caroline received the following letter :

“ I dare not converse with you, my lady ; but I dare write to you. You may read what you ought not to hear. Be not startled : I shall not utter a syllable respecting my love. My adverse destiny imposes silence : it has interposed a partition between us which I never dare transgress.”

Lady Caròline was highly gratified with this exordium : she ascribed the reserve which it expressed to the modesty of Victor, and then continued to read as follows :

“ I am perfectly aware of what honour enjoins me to do, or prohibits me from doing. I might make a confes-

sion of my love, without failing in my moral obligations towards you, towards myself—O my Mary! my beloved Mary!....”

“ Mary! my beloved Mary!” reiterated Lady Caroline. How shall we endeavour to depict the dreadful and instantaneous shock which this expression communicated to the frame of this arrogant and passionate woman?

Gentle reader, hast thou not occasionally remarked a black speck suddenly starting up on the azure sky, whilst a ship was out at sea? A passenger, lulled into security, discerns

nothing more than a simple cloud; but the experienced pilot instantly furls the sails, and lashes them to the main-mast. The black speck accumulates, overspreads the horizon, descends, bursts, and disgorges livid sheets of lightning, tornadoes, rain, and all those elements which accompany the thunder of Jupiter.

In like manner did the bare name of her gentle and modest sister awaken within the breast of Lady Caroline the mingled emotions of wrath and pride; her indignation made her recoil, but she presently resumed her painful lecture with a stammering accent :

“ Mary, my beloved Mary!—angel of goodness and meekness, of innocence and affection !”

“ That generous rhapsody which escaped your lips, which proceeded from your heart, which ought to put the vain Lady Caroline to the blush.....”

At this passage Lady Caroline was seized with a sudden tremor, and faltered in her speech, but at the same instant she conceived hopes, and meditated schemes of revenge ; she was convulsed with rage, and being possessed, as it were, with one of those strange instincts, which make us take

an unaccountable delight in tormenting ourselves, by tearing the bandages from our wounds, and aggravating our agony, she struggled against her own mortification, and continued to read as follows, without any further pause :

“..... Ought to put the vain Lady Caroline to the blush. Did I ever once forget, think you, these angelic words? Do you imagine that I was not compelled to summon all my reason to my aid, in order to refrain from falling prostrate at your feet, from bedewing them with tears of sympathy, of gratitude, and love?

“Mary, my beloved Mary, your

soul is even more beautiful than your angelic person. How comes it to pass that Lady Mary should be the offspring of the same mother who gave life to Lady Caroline, a creature so absolutely void of sensibility, that she does not even know when she insults the feelings of others.

Your goodness, Mary, your delicacy, have never once escaped my observation. Even before your lips pronounced those words, which threw me into such a delicious ecstasy, before they revealed those secrets of your heart which I imbibed with such pleasure and avidity, and concealed with such religious faith within my bosom; even before this, I say, did I

not perceive how much you suffered for my sake on account of those proposals which Lady Caroline supposed to be irresistible, but whose manner was so disgusting, that she made me overlook whatever was meritorious in her design? You know my mind, and that is sufficient. Far from being desirous to share the fortunes of your sister, I would rather labour in the mines of Dalecarlia, than be indebted to her arrogant generosity, to her insulting compassion. But I am only speaking of her, I am only speaking of myself; and yet when I designed to write to you, it was not to speak of myself or her, but of you—of yourself alone!

“ Mary, ever dear and adorable, you love me! I have the vanity to believe this, and this will suffice for my happiness, but it will not suffice for your’s! If an involuntary sympathy, if an irresistible impulse attracts us towards each other, it is highly gratifying to yield to this delirium of our senses; but it is far more prudent to withstand it. It behoves you to reflect, and it behoves me to advise you.

“ You cannot know me without my own spontaneous assistance. I, myself, will give you an insight into my own character, I will not conceal any of my imperfections from your knowledge.

“ When you have had time to convince yourself that you are not deluded by an idle chimera—should you still remain fascinated by the spells of your present potent enchantment—should they still survive, in spite of all my efforts to dissolve the charm ; then will my destinies be attached to your own by an indissoluble knot. I will venture to speak to my friend, your brother ; I will overcome his prejudices by being surety for your happiness ; I will venture myself to claim your hand, although my pride has made me constantly reject the advances of Lady Caroline. Heavens ! Mary, what a disparity is there between you and her ! Should heaven restore me to my coun-

try, to my existence and fortune; should it afford me an opportunity of exchanging situations with you; were you bereft of fortune and of country, so that it were perfectly at my option to make such a choice; I should nevertheless prefer the happiness of owing every thing to your goodness to the happiness of conferring every blessing upon you."

During this painful lecture, none of my readers will doubt that the bosom of Lady Caroline was tormented with all the furies of disappointed love. Her lips quivered twenty times; her countenance turned pale; her tongue faltered. Sometimes she would read

with the anxious haste of a poor wretch sentenced to run over burning coals: Sometimes she would make a sudden pause with the stupor and horror of a barefooted traveller when he happens to tread upon a serpent lurking in the grass. When she came to the end of the letter, the violence of her temper vented itself in a furious explosion: she demolished every thing that lay within her grasp. The looking-glass at her toilet, the china service in her apartment, were the first victims of her spleen. In a paroxysm of rage, she trampled the fatal letter under foot; then she took it up and read it over again, bestowing all the imprecations

upon it which she thought Victor and her sister could possibly deserve. She cursed Victor for an ungrateful, insolent vagrant, a scoundrel and seducer. Her transports were occasionally suspended by a deceitful calm. She revolved in her mind a thousand projects of revenge; and she dwelt with peculiar self-complacency upon the most malicious of her schemes. Thus she passed the night without closing her eyes, whilst her heart was open to all the suggestions of injured pride. At length the morning appeared, and her final resolution was taken.

On her side Lady Mary had received the following letter.

“ The offer of your hand, my lady, and of your fortune, would assuredly create a number of envious rivals. You might bestow your favours to much better advantage. The friendship of your brother, the kindness of his sisters, will suffice for me. You love candour, you will therefore excuse my frankness. I know the value of that which I reject. You know a great deal, my lady ; but you have still to learn those obligations we owe to misery when she supports the pride and independence of our nature. But al-

low me to pause here..... The only wish I have still to breathe is, that Lady Caroline will vouchsafe to confide in my respect and gratitude.

VICTOR DE LEYRIS."

The sight of Victor's hand-writing, and the first lines of this letter, at first overwhelmed Lady Mary with consternation; but she presently discovered the truth, and shed tears of joy. Her second emotions were the overflowings of her generous soul. She vowed to return the letter not to her sister, but to the person by whom it had been penned. This did not, indeed, proceed from a wish to induce him to re-

cant, but in order to persuade him to qualify the severity of his refusal.

In this benevolent frame of mind, she enjoyed that tranquil repose which exclusively falls to the lot of happiness and innocence; and on the next morning she came down to breakfast with a serene and smiling countenance.

Lady Caroline made her appearance, concealing her malice under an appearance of composure. She found fault with every thing, which was an ordinary feature of her character. As they withdrew she accosted her sister coldly, and said, “Here is a letter for you, which has been delivered to me.

and which I have perused. Advise those gentlemen with whom you correspond hereafter, to be more careful in directing their letters."

Lady Mary, who was trembling with anxiety and suspense, took the letter mechanically, being unable to make any reply.

The day was tempestuous: the implacable lady was constantly throwing out specious accusations against Victor, by blaming the confidence reposed in foreigners, by exclaiming against their ingratitude, and against the danger of admitting them into our families.

Wiseby shrugged up his shoulders, or appeared to listen to her without hearing what she said. When they rose from table, Lady Caroline ordered her horses to be saddled, bade her brother farewell, and said to Lady Mary, with a very significant look, “ I shall not take leave of you, Lady Mary; you shall presently hear from me.”

CHAP. VII.

REVENGE.

WHEN we have to perform services, we frequently meet with formidable obstacles, which must be vanquished ; but when we are going to do mischief, the most impotent and narrow-minded of all mortals always contrives to find means and resources. In one single moment Lady Caroline had already concerted her project of revenge. There was nothing wanting to secure its speedy execution. Mortified self-

love never proportions the punishment to the offence. Let us therefore be candid enough to say in her justification, that Lady Caroline had never once reflected upon the criminal and atrocious designs she was about to carry into execution. She drove to Windsor, alighted at the house of the Countess of T...., her friend and near relative, one of Her Majesty's ladies of honour, who enjoyed the royal confidence. She described M. de Leyris as a suspected foreigner, whose presence and revolutionary sentiments might prove dangerous, and requested that the Alien Bill might be enforced against him. The wicked are always successful; calumny is always believed, although

credulity has frequently cause to bewail her own mistakes. The Countess of T.... was blindly subservient to the malicious rage of Lady Caroline; and when the latter departed from Windsor, the storm was already lowering, and ready to discharge its fury. She set out again for Wiseby Place, in order to feast her eyes with the delicious spectacle.

On the other hand, Victor, who was far from suspecting any danger, returned according to his agreement. The uncertainty what effect his two letters might have produced caused him great uneasiness. The consciousness of having hearkened to the dic-

tates of honour comforted him under the apprehensions of the consequences which might result from this measure. This was, however, not sufficient to tranquillize his soul. Great as his attachment to Wiseby might be, how seductive soever the image of Lady Mary might appear in the eyes of his imagination, he was still resolved to break all the ties of love and friendship, to quit Wiseby Place, nay even to forsake England, provided his presence should cause the least uneasiness to the family of his friend ; provided Lady Caroline, taking offence at his refusal, should be so perverse as to make her worthy brother or her young sister suffer for it. These apprehen-

sions were insupportable to him: he cross-examined himself whether he had not been guilty of ingratitude by the manner in which he had rejected her proposals, which, although actually offensive, were perhaps not intentionally so. The sole mistake of Lady Caroline might have arisen from her being ignorant that when we offend delicacy, it is the most sensible of all injuries. In short, notwithstanding his innocence, he was ready to take the whole blame to himself. Whilst Victor was thus distracted with a cruel warfare within his own breast, Lady Caroline urged her course with all the impetuous velocity of vengeance, and arrived at Wiseby Place. The cer-

tainty of revenge gave her a secret satisfaction, which produced a strange revolution in her temper, insomuch that Lady Mary, although her cunning was much inferior to her good-nature, began to mistrust the design of her absence. Lord Wiseby himself would have suspected her statement, had she even made him acquainted with the purpose of her journey : she therefore listened to her brother and sister without betraying any symptoms of impatience, when she heard them speak of Victor, and complain of the void he had left behind him at Wiseby Place. Finally, when a joyful exclamation announced his return, Lady Caroline knew so well how to disguise

her features, that M. de Leyris, apprehending that his letter had caused her in no manner of uneasiness, felt himself relieved from a great burden.

He then proceeded to make his report concerning the result of his journey, which was, indeed, far from being satisfactory, as his countryman had only given him some stale news and some vague reports. He only learnt, for instance, that the aunt of Adriana had fallen a victim to her disorder ; but he was left altogether in the dark, whether Adriana had returned to France, or whether she was not at Constance, at Dresden, or at Munster. All he could say for certain was this,

that about six months back Adriana had invested money in the bank at Hamburgh, whence he was led to suppose that she had a regular correspondent in that city. "From these loose hints," added Victor, "I have ventured to entrust my friend with a letter, which he has promised to use his best endeavours to forward to this correspondent, but without pledging himself for the success of his undertaking." "It is a very essential point to be careful about a proper direction," exclaimed Lady Caroline, in a manner so apparently gay and thoughtless, that Wiseby thought she was only uttering an idle word, and Victor recovered his former serenity. As for Lady

Mary, she became thoughtful, without being absolutely uneasy, nor yet quite unconcerned, her mind fluctuating between fear and hope, a state of mind which Lady Caroline was quite overjoyed to discover. Lord Wiseby, who had fondly supposed that now the fortunate crisis was arrived when he should collect information concerning the fate of Madame d'Azemar, was too melancholy to desire to prolong the conversation. "You must be fatigued, dear Victor," said he to his friend, squeezing his hand: "and, as I believe this is likewise the case with you, dear Caroline," added he, "let us adjourn for this evening: but first of all, allow me to compliment you

upon this occasion. You must certainly have made a pleasant journey, for you are not so much troubled with the spleen as you were at the period of your departure."

Each of the company betook himself to rest ; as for Victor, his repose was not to be of long duration.

CHAP. VIII.

THE DREAM.

“ You will find me strangely altered,” cried Lady Caroline, as she entered the breakfast-parlour next morning. “ The truth is that I have had a dismal dream.”

“ A dismal dream ! How so, pray ? ” exclaimed Lady Mary.

“ It was a dismal dream I can assure you,” resumed Lady Caroline. “ I have been dreaming about you, Count

Victor. Methought you were walking in the avenue of Wiseby Place, with a female habited in white. It was night, but it was a very gloomy night. The heavens were overcast, and methought I could distinguish you by the livid gleams of the lightning. The young woman, whom I did not recognise....It was not you, my dear pretty sister," said she, looking at Lady Mary with an affectation of simplicity : but any one who eyed Lady Caroline at the present moment with wistful attention, might have discovered a malicious joy in her looks. She enjoyed the satisfaction of having awakened pleasing emotions within the bosom of her sister, which were

visible in the eyes of the latter, and arose from a pleasing association of ideas which her fancy conjured up, namely, a dark night, a refreshing shade, and Victor seated beside her, although this was merely the dream of a third person.

“ The young woman,” resumed Lady Caroline, “ whom I did not recognise, sought in vain to persuade you, Count Victor, to withdraw. A bush, swarming with scorpions, attracted my gaze : they elevated their crests, and began to hiss most hideously. Upon this signal, methought I heard the rattling of a chariot drawn by stags, which suddenly halted opposite to us :

an invisible power hand-cuffed M. de Leyris, and forced him into 'the chariot ; the young lady swooned away, the chariot disappeared, and I could only discern a dismal tempest, which caused me suddenly to awake.'"

Lady Caroline was silent—Lady Mary was melancholy and thoughtful. It was not because she had any faith in dreams ; but her lively sensations awakened a whole chain of corresponding ideas, and one gloomy thought would suffice to make her sad for a whole day together.

The lord and his friend Victor remarking these dismal forebodings

which agitated the bosom of Lady Mary, sought to demonstrate that no manner of credit ought to be attached to dreams, which every body says, but which few people are inclined to believe. Wiseby questioned Lady Caroline, whether she could not start a more pleasing topic of conversation, and hinted, that as there were so many other subjects, she need not be greatly embarrassed in her choice. "Dear brother," cried she, "why should you lose your time in listened to ~~me~~? If you don't take heed, you will let the hour slip for taking the air on horse-back."

Wiseby, on looking at his watch,

agreed that he had tarried somewhat too long, and withdrew from the company. The cruel lady was not without her motive in making her brother withdraw. An hour had already elapsed since he left the company: Lady Mary felt those strange forebodings and alarms which are frequently the forerunners of dismal accidents, and which we are not accustomed to recollect, till the fatal stroke has actually taken place. As for Lady Caroline, she was silent, appeared anxiously to tell the minutes and time of day, and was astonished to see no person make his appearance. Victor said to Lady Mary in a low whisper, "What a change has this dream produced in

your sister's disposition ! she does not utter a syllable. I never saw her so silent and pensive before. Only observe how sedate and composed her spirits are." The amiable young lady looked at him with a sad and wistful countenance. " Your eyes are not quicksighted," said she. " Do but observe the motion of her foot." In reality the foot of her eldest sister went pit-a-pat with such a rapid vibration, as indicated at once her malice, her rage, and her apprehension of being disappointed in her expectation. Her hopes, however, were but too fatally accomplished. A post-chaise entered the avenue of Wiseby Place, and halted before the door of

the mansion. A man, dressed in black, alighted from the chaise, and inquired for Count Victor de Leyris. Lady Mary, agitated with solicitude, and Lady Caroline, being influenced by far different motives, concurred in desiring the stranger to be ushered into the house.

The state messenger, for such he actually was, instantly drew his badge of office out of his pocket, and acquainted Victor that he must hold himself in readiness to accompany him to Harwich. He then read the ostensible order for his expulsion from the realm, by which it appeared that he was liable to the penalty of the Alien

Bill. "I shall follow you, sir," said the friend of Wiseby. "I am not even inclined to disobey the unjust orders of any government." The messenger went out to make preparations for his departure. "Now all my wishes are accomplished," exclaimed Lady Caroline with an air of triumph. "Alas ! what an execrable villainy is this ! I plainly perceive that my apprehensions were not groundless," cried Lady Mary with an accent of despair.

Her sister made no reply; but surveyed her with a glance of ineffable scorn. "How, my lady," cried Victor, in violent agitation, "are you the

author of this infamous plot? I might have saved you from this shame. If my banishment was the scope of your wishes, there was no occasion for this vengeance."

"Do you call this my vengeance?" furiously cried Lady Caroline. "Thus far you are only acquainted with my mode of punishment. You are banished out of England: you are not even allowed to take any thing along with you. You are cast naked upon a foreign land, helpless, and without a friend. A wretched victim to indigence and contempt, every door will be shut against you. You will be suspected every where, without any

safeguard, save only your word of honour, which nobody will believe.”

At these words, Lady Mary, overwhelmed with consternation, exclaimed, “ Dear sister, for God’s sake—dear sister, what do you say ? ” “ Barbarous woman ! ” ejaculated Victor with an indignant tone. “ Suffer me to speak,” cried the passionate dame, with an imperious and commanding voice. “ Be not deluded with idle hopes that the friendship of my brother will mitigate your sufferings, or that his riches will rescue you from the jaws of famine. It is no longer his hand which can avert the misery and infamy that await you : it is my own ; and in despite of yourself, you

must be indebted for every thing to my generosity. Here, sir, take this small dividend of what you so arrogantly refused to share with me. With this you will find yourself in affluent circumstances in any country. I was desirous to punish you, and my wish is gratified. But this is the way in which an Englishwoman is accustomed to avenge her wrongs. This portfolio is full of bank-notes, which are current every where. You may travel where you please; England domineers in every quarter of the globe."

Victor scornfully thrust back the port-folio, and the hand which tendered the present, when suddenly the

messenger of state made his appearance again. His appearance, which was a signal for a fatal farewell, extorted from Lady Mary a scream of agony and of love. Hurried away by the violence of her feelings, she seized the hand of Victor, and rushed into his arms. "Suppress, I entreat you," cried he, sobbing, and clasping her in his arms, "for God's sake, suppress those tears, which only aggravate the horror of my destiny. My resolution will scarcely suffice to support it. Farewel, amiable lady," cried he.— "Am I really an object of pity?" added he with a bitter smile. "I take your dear remembrance along with me, and I dare flatter myself that I

leave you mine. Farewel, my beloved mistress ! my adored Mary, farewel."

The young lady was hitherto unwilling to disengage herself from the arms of Victor, who, on his side, could not prevail upon himself to compel her to withdraw : but no sooner did she hear his last solemn farewel, than she eagerly recollected herself, and betraying evident symptoms of disorder both in her speech and looks, " Pronounce that word farewel no more," said she ; " I will not hear it any longer." No sooner had she uttered these words, than she darted out of the castle quick as lightning, screaming aloud, " Where is my bro-

ther, where is my brother ? For pity's sake, dear friends, shew me which way my brother went."

In the mean time Victor, who was struggling manfully against his own grief, was placed under the safeguard of the state messenger. Lady Caroline remained alone, and appeared absolutely amazed, exclaiming, whilst she scornfully threw away the portfolio, which he had left behind him, " I do not comprehend that fellow's meaning."

CHAP. IX

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

VICTOR, who had supported adversity with admirable constancy, as if it were a necessary ingredient in the composition of human nature, was less concerned about futurity and his own destiny, than distressed with the affliction of Lady Mary and of Lord Wiseby. Whilst the carriage hurried him away with velocity from Wiseby Place, the young lady, who was no longer a timid woman, but a passionate mistress, sharing the destinies of her

gallant, flew on the wings of love and hope to meet her brother, and begrudged every moment when she was compelled to halt and take breath, as so much precious time idly lost. She had already walked a full hour before she discovered him. "Brother," cried she, "he is gone. He has been forced from us." She hesitated in her speech, and paused in order to take breath. "Who, pray?" "He himself. I tell you Victor himself. A messenger of state.... Lady Caroline.. Come, I beseech you, come, dear brother, come, and arrest the triumph of villainy; revenge the insult offered to your friendship, the misery entailed upon my existence.... come quickly,

dear brother, I beseech you to come.” Her utterance being choaked with sobs, Lady Mary sunk motionless into the arms of Wiseby, whose visage was bedewed with tears. The latter supported her in his arms, trembling with the most lively solicitude, and sent to a neighbouring cottage for some cold water, he besought her to pluck up her spirits, to recollect herself, and to reckon upon his aid. When she had recovered her senses, “ Explain your meaning,” cried he. “ Victor.... A messenger of state.... Lady Caroline.. .. What were you going to say ?”

Lord Wiseby was one of those characters who carry a tincture of phlegm

only, on their outside, and who only become gradually susceptible of strong emotions. The obscure expressions of his sister did not instantly suffice to rouse him up to an equal pitch of phrenzy and indignation. He was never enraged till he had sufficient cause to be so. "Let us hear what you have to say," cried he, in a tone of voice at once serious and friendly. "What is the matter, dear child? Speak calmly and deliberately, and believe me, there is scarcely any evil which has not a remedy."

She then explained as clearly as she possibly could, although with visible uneasiness, the arrival of the messenger

of state, the warrant which he brought along with him, and the celerity with which the fatal arrest had been declared and executed. Her explanation was mingled with invectives against Lady Caroline, and she frequently paused in her narration, in order to give her brother an affectionate embrace. She reminded him of his affection for Victor, and of the friendship which Victor bore towards him : in short, waving all secondary considerations at such a critical period, she ventured to make a confession of his love, assigning this as a primary cause for the base revenge of her sister, being anxious lest Wiseby should not espouse the cause of Victor with suffi-

cient warmth, and being likewise uneasy because her brother's feelings were not quite so keen as her own. In order to produce a thorough conviction, and to demonstrate whose hand had struck this blow, she delivered two letters from Victor, which Wiseby did not however judge proper to read at that critical moment; and then she gave him an explanation how both of them happened to be found in her possession.

Notwithstanding the agitation visible in the countenance of the sister during this conversation, Wiseby understood her perfectly well, the more so, as he had himself divined the whole

transaction long since. He did not even appear to notice that she had any personal concern in a cause which she pleaded with so much vehemence. His sole study was to appease her, and to condole with her on the subject of the disgrace which their common friend had suffered. With one glance he instantly divined both the evil and the remedy, and said calmly to his sister, "All we have now to do is to reach Harwich before him; and should he even arrive there a few hours before us, we must indeed be very unlucky; or it is great odds whether or not the packet is ready to take him on board, and to make the wide ocean a barrier betwixt us."

Mary, full of eagerness and impatience, inquired abruptly who the person was whom he should entrust with this special mission. "When I am desirous of having my business performed with punctuality and accuracy," said he, "I always do it myself."

In that very instant there was not under the canopy of heaven a creature more thoroughly actuated with the overflowings of joy and gratitude than the sensible and good-natured Mary. Victor now possessed only an inferior place in her affections: true it is she loved him, but her brother now appeared to her as an object

worthy of adoration. Wiseby conducted her back to the mansion on foot. He took her under his arm, picking her steps for her as they went along; for he rightly judged, from the abundance of tears which she shed, as also from her whole external appearance, that her thoughts and her eyes were wandering on the road to Harwich. “Dear sister,” said Lord Wiseby to Lady Mary on their arrival, “give the requisite orders for my departure. Get my horse Lightning brought hither, ready saddled. Sure I am, that if I am obliged to wait, it will not be your fault.”

At that very moment they perceived

Lady Caroline advancing towards them. Lady Mary was seized with a tremor, looked wistfully at Wiseby, as if she would fain implore his aid once more, and ran to the Arabian stud. Ever since her sudden departure her vindictive sister had very rightly guessed that she was gone to acquaint Lord Wiseby with the whole transaction, and to prefer an accusation against her. She was abashed and confounded, like an assassin, who fears he has dealt too hard a blow, and looks with horror upon the very arm he has employed in perpetrating his criminal deed. She betrayed the looks and gestures of a child who has just discharged a pistol. The sight

of her brother overwhelmed her with consternation ; but that presence of mind which is peculiar to woman enabled her to recover an unparalleled assurance and effrontery, which appears astonishing to people who are unpractised in the wiles of female tactics. Such women present a front without any depth, one simple line, which looks as though it would bid defiance to an enemy ; but when it comes to hard blows the line is presently broken, and the general is put to the rout. It was therefore the practice of Lady Caroline to march out and face an enemy, rather than act upon the defensive, or await the shock of his assault. She opened her

mouth, in order to speak ; but his lordship, regarded her with such a stern aspect as completely silenced her. He conducted her by the hand ; and after they were arrived at such a distance as not to be overheard by any one, he addressed her as follows :

“ Caroline, you have been guilty of an atrocious crime : you have branded the English name with dishonour ; you have stigmatised a whole nation in the person of this single man. This you shall not do with impunity.

“ I desire that you will instantly give me all the particulars of this vile plot, which you have so rashly concerted.

Recollect that you are not standing now before your brother, but in the presence of a peer of England, and that it is the honour of a whole country which you have injured. I command you to speak."

The intrepid and dignified tone of voice which accompanied these expressions instantly disarmed Lady Caroline of all her effrontery. Vanquished in the august presence of a superior whom she could not resist, she hesitated, blushed, bit her lips; nay, her vexation even extorted some tears from her, and at length she confessed to her brother the only circumstances which were yet a mystery to him. She dis-

closed all the stratagems she had employed, in order to ruin Victor, and described even the very form of the warrant by which he had been taken away. After having extorted rather than acquired this information, he acquainted her with his design of absenting himself for a few days, and enjoined her to withdraw to London.

“ Lady Mary will remain here alone,” added he : “ she lives with her brother, but you stand in the presence of your judge.”

He went instantly in search of Lady Mary, who brought Lightning with

her, and the jockey who was to accompany Wiseby.

The features of the latter were quickly unbent again, and he re-assumed his accustomed good-nature and cheerfulness.

“ You shall not be long solitary,” said he to his beloved sister, as he was mounting on horseback. “ I request it as a favour of you, to make an excursion now and then on the road leading to Harwich.”

He withdrew with a celerity which was truly gratifying to Lady Mary, who followed him with her eyes, until he was quite out of sight.

CHAP. X.

THE FLUX AND REFLUX.

LADY Caroline entertained false principles ; but she was not deficient in honour or magnanimity. Her pride would never vouchsafe to make a public acknowledgment of her contrition, for this she would have regarded as pusillanimity ; whereas, far from concealing it from herself in private, she censured herself very freely ; so much so that the voice of her own brother did not accuse her in such a loud and unequivocal manner as her own con-

science. The mean subterfuge which she had employed in order to gratify her lust of revenge, now appeared odious to her, more especially since Wiseby had exposed it in all its hideous deformity. She was now undeceived and enraged against herself, so that, conformably to the violence of her character, she was ready to adopt the most extravagant schemes, in order to re-establish herself in her own estimation.

In this frame of mind, she happened to meet with her younger sister, who still indulged some fond hopes, although she was deeply afflicted. In this first encounter, the former stopt

short, and the latter turned her head another way. Lady Caroline took Lady Mary by the hand; but the latter rejected her civility with indignation. “Forbear, sister, for God’s sake!—forbear!” said she—“You are highly culpable.”

“Pray, don’t be so free with your censure,” rejoined Lady Caroline in a haughty tone. “Do you imagine that it would be a hard task for me to compel you to overlook the injury. I have done you?”

“The injury you have done me, barbarous woman!” cried Lady Mary.
“Am I the only one concerned? Be-

think yourself. Do you not actually know the person whom you have plunged into the gulf of misery? Is my bosom the only one which you have afflicted with despondency? You have made our generous and worthy brother far more wretched than myself."

"My brother, do you say?" returned Lady Caroline, with a scornful and ambiguous look. "Is it possible that a man of his fortitude, of his wisdom, should not be beyond the reach of my malevolence? I never yet conceived myself possessed of such power."

Such incorrigible obstinacy and in-

the lady
that above the
level of a common temper. Their
long familiarity inspired her with re-
solution enough to address her sister,
in the most impassioned tone, to the
following effect :

“ Thou monster of malice and in-
gratitude ! dost thou not perceive that,
by banishing the innocent and unfor-
tunate Count Victor from England,
thou hast for ever annulled our hopes
of ever beholding his sister amongst
us ? Know then that Madame d’Aze-
mar has long been the darling object
of the fond wishes, of the thoughts
and sorrows of our brother.

“ That cannot be true,” cried Lady Caroline, with an affectation of surprise.

Hereupon Lady Mary, overruled by the conviction of her own breast, acquainted her sister with all the information she had derived partly from the circumstance of the open blinds, and partly from the hints which had occasionally fallen from her brother; demonstrating, from circumstantial evidence, the uniform and ardent affection of Wiseby for Adriana, and not forgetting to employ every argument which might aggravate the remorse of Lady Caroline for the crime she had committed.

Lady Caroline listened to her with profound attention, without making any reply.

Being disheartened, when she discovered no symptoms of contrition in the countenance of her sister, Lady Mary had recourse to the last expedient usually resorted to by souls endued with sensibility when all other resources fail—she burst into tears, and withdrew.

When any particular idea took possession of the mind of Lady Caroline, it engrossed her attention so entirely, that she would often be solitary even in the midst of society; and her fancy

would transport her to a solitude. On the present occasion, therefore, she was not aware of the abrupt departure of her afflicted sister. Any other woman would have sympathised with the sensibility of this gentle lady, would have wept along with her, would have evinced candour and sincerity, in order to avoid the suspicion of obduracy, and would have communicated the generous purposes which agitated her breast. But nature had denied her that delicacy of sentiment, that gentle fire of sensibility, which, among the generality of women, sheds at intervals a mild lustre, makes us indulgent towards their imperfections, and ready to bury all their faults in oblivion.

With a mind wholly engrossed with the plans which she had just concerted, which her fancy treasured up, and in idea had already executed, she walked hastily to and fro, uttered some unconnected monosyllables, with such violent agitation, that her body appeared to labour as much as her mind. “Well then,” cried she, “be it so ! If I have been guilty of a fault, pray do the male sex never commit any ? They are guilty of the most outrageous insults upon our delicacy. Do they know how to display their magnanimity by a generous reparation ?

“ My brother has ventured to employ threats, and pretends that he will

make me repent of having avenged my own personal wrongs. I will be beforehand with him, and will compel him to blush for his own want of discernment, in being unable to divine all that I am capable of doing."

Lord Wiseby had already acquainted her that he would speedily return. The pressure of the moment, therefore, urged her to take an abrupt leave of her sister, without disclosing, however, the plans she had concerted ; and she set off from Wiseby Place, cherishing the same hostility as formerly towards her associates, but presuming that she was fairly entitled to entertain a better opinion of herself.

CHAP. XI.

A RETURN AND A DEPARTURE.

READER, you may possibly have seen Steibelt seated before a piano forte, gliding with a swift and dexterous hand from the octaves of the treble to the octaves of the bass, and regaling your ears with an uninterrupted stream of harmony: you may possibly have seen that renowned bird of passage, so celebrated in oriental tales, hurrying both the reader and the hero of the story a hundred leagues forward

in the twinkling of an eye. The veracity of his tale, who is solicitous to preserve the unities of time and place, does not furnish him with such subsidiary aids. We must therefore even content ourselves to learn somewhat later, what occurred during these four days, I will not say at Harwich, but at a town somewhat nearer ; at Colchester and also London. Let us suppose this time already elapsed: let us suppose Lord Wiseby and M. de Leyris on horseback, galloping back full speed to Wiseby Place, and that they are now arrived within one league of the mansion. Would to God that it were in my power to convey this intelligence to the sweet and amiable

Lady Mary, to whom these four days appeared like four ages, and who is not aware that the period of her sufferings is so near at hand. What was she doing, think you, in the drawing-room of Wiseby Place, when she was not petitioning heaven for the safety of her brother? What else could she do than think of Victor? for every object reminded her of him. This, for example, was the spot where she took her last farewell; here she would tarry, and cherish hopes and fears. Where-soever she turned her regards, she beheld landscapes of which they had made drawings together, with their names inscribed underneath; or perhaps she descried nosegays which he

had taught her to paint. In another corner was a pretty portrait which had allured them to approach each other, and which they were accustomed to contemplate in sweet communion.

Thus the drawing-room at Wiseby Place was the centre of all her fond desires ; she found herself surrounded with the dear memorials of Victor, which made her approximate in idea to his person. Suddenly her ears were saluted with a joyful sound ; Lady Mary beheld his person and heard his voice. Who this gentleman was, the reader will surely not enquire. She screamed aloud, and rushed into the arms of her brother. Had she only

hearkened to the suggestions of her gratitude, she would have fallen prostrate at his feet. But the interview of the Count de Leyris was a subject of greater difficulty, and our two lovers would have been greatly embarrassed, had not Wiseby very opportunely relieved them from their awkward situation.

“Come, dear sister,” said he to Mary, pointing to her happy Victor, “two friends, well met, ought to embrace each other.” He was unwilling, however, to prolong this affecting scene, being apprehensive that it might stagger his principles and received maxims. He hastened there-

fore to put a stop to the dialogue going forward between Victor and Lady Mary, calling aloud, " Pish ! pish ! Talk no more about our departure, let us converse about our return. Let us imagine that we are but just awoke from an unpleasant dream, and that it is already morning. Your impatience, dear sister, admonishes me that I have forgot to acquaint you with the means by which I was enabled to restore Victor to our friendship. He will surely excuse me for repeating circumstances in his presence with which he is already acquainted.

" He had been some hours at the Antelope Tavern, at Colchester, when

I arrived. He did not appear surprised at my appearance, because it was nothing more than he expected. I requested Mr. Robinson, the messenger, to defer the execution of his warrant, and I offered him my security, which he accepted. I hastened to London, and alighted at the Duke of P....'s, to whom I was immediately admitted. Entering immediately upon the subject, I told him that the Count de Leyris, who, in consequence of groundless calumnies, had been ordered out of the kingdom under the operation of the alien-act, was my particular friend. I confessed that having overtaken him at Colchester, I had ventured upon my own personal responsibility to procure

a postponement of his deportation ; and I requested of the minister to countermand an order which had been obtained from him by imposture.

“ The duke told me frankly, that the charges brought against Victor were so strong, that he would refuse to any one but myself his compliance with such a request ; that however he would believe me upon my word. He wrote with his own hand a counter-order, of which, in order to complete my satisfaction, he permitted me to be the bearer. I confess that something of vanity mingled itself with the gratification I experienced on this occasion. I could not refrain from being flattered

with the kind of deference which had been shewn me, that a single word, a single step on my part, had been sufficient to restore the repose, and to vindicate the innocence and honour of my friend. However (added Lord Wiseby, in a less serious tone), if I forgot some of the details, you will very soon have an opportunity of reading them in print. The daily papers will take care to inform the public how I conducted myself on the occasion, and will omit no circumstance either true or probable. Only out of delicacy and for fear of an action of damages, they will print only the first and the last letter of our names, with precisely as many dots between them as there are

intermediate letters in them ; so that that will be no impediment to their being pronounced at full length in the coffee-houses. In England nothing is kept a secret from the public."

Scarcely had the earl finished his recital, when Lady Mary drew a letter from her bosom, and presented it to him with a timid air. Astonished at first at her apparent embarrassment, he soon discovered its cause, when he recognised the hand-writing of Lady Caroline. This letter had been brought from London in the morning. Wiseby read it with evident marks of uneasiness : " What a head !" exclaimed he, after some time ; " hear what your sister writes me."

“ I am in the wrong, my brother... There are not many women who would make such a confession; but as Lord Wisby does not resemble the generality of brothers, neither ought his sister to resemble the generality of sisters. You have repaired the mischief I have done: I know it; and in the space of two hours I shall be no longer in London. Do not endeavour to discover what road I take, nor to what country my determination carries me. It is I alone that know it, and that ought to know it. You will not see me again until I shall be able to compel you to admit, that in believing me unworthy of your esteem you have

little known and wrongly judged your sister,

CAROLINE MILFORD.

“ Another piece of extravagance!” exclaimed Wiseby when he had finished reading this letter. “ Where can she have been, Mary? The world ought to be large; your poor sister may change her place, but her head will never be changed.” His natural benevolence, however, would not suffer him to think without uneasiness of the determination which Lady Caroline announced. In vain he endeavoured to fathom her motive for this sudden departure: Lady Mary could furnish him with no

light respecting it. She herself was bewildered in conjectures which pointed to no fixed idea. Nothing was certain but the disappearance of this lady, the most inconsistent, the most eccentric of her sex; but whether she was gone to Scotland, whether she still remained in England, or whether she had passed over into the continent, it was impossible to tell. With a character like hers, her letter afforded much matter for conjecture, but none from which any certain inference could be drawn.

CHAP. XI.

A L T E R N A T I V E.

LORD Wiseby had remarked, without letting it be perceived, how much Lady Caroline's letter had affected Victor; and he recollected with uneasiness what his friend had said to him on the road from Colchester to Wiseby Place. Even in the effusion of his gratitude, Victor had proved to him that his delicacy was equal to his sensibility, by earnestly requesting his consent to his departure. A positive refusal had on the earl's answer: the generous-

mind Frenchman had insisted upon his point, asserting that his departure was a necessary consequence of his gratitude, an obligation which honour imposed upon him. Pushed to an extremity, Lord Wiseby had concluded, by begging him to postpone this discussion till their arrival at Wiseby Place, and had changed the conversation.

He now found himself in a cruel state of perplexity. Victor and Lady Mary loved each other; of that he could not doubt; and he now saw himself placed between their love and his established system—that opinion so rooted in his mind, his avowed aver-

sion to matrimony. Towards which side should he incline? His principle could not yield. It did not even enter his ideas to subject it to examination. After a certain period, a principle maintains itself without other aid: the pyramids of Egypt, which defy the lapse of ages, have no foundations. But he did not feel in himself the courage to sacrifice to it that tender interest which made him sympathize with the weakness of his sister and of his friend, with their unfortunate wish to unite their destinies. In the first place, how could he resolve to wound the heart of Lady Mary by the most cutting of refusals? and how could he foresee without poignant regret, the

natural consequence of this refusal, the inevitable departure of Victor, of him whom he equally loved and esteemed, of the brother of Adriana?—It was not that Wiseby actually thought it a mark of insanity to love: only marriage he could not tolerate, because he was habituated to believe it to be the signing of the doom of the parties to misery; but having compared in his wisdom, or rather in his affection, the evil, certain in his own idea, with the no less certain misery into which his rigour would plunge two lovers so infatuated with each other, he, after long deliberation, acknowledged that he did not possess the right of choosing for them, and resolved to reconcile, as

far as it could be done, an adherence to his own opinion with the interests of their passion.

The day after his return, he sent to request Lady Mary to attend him in his library. A request from her excellent brother was to her an order which she would have quitted every thing to obey. She hastened to him: the earl took her by the hand, made her sit down, carefully fastened the door, and after having satisfied himself that he could be heard by no one but his sister, he said to her, with mildness, but at the same time with solemnity, and without any preamble—

“ You love Victor; I do not ask whether Victor loves you.”

At this opening, the bashful Mary, whom an urgent danger had caused to depart only for a moment from her accustomed reserve, seemed quite disconcerted.

“ I did not imagine, my dear sister,” resumed Wiseby, on observing her agitation, “ that I was telling you any thing you did not know before; it would seem however that I have been imparting to you the most unexpected piece of information.”

These words were pronounced with

such a tone of pleasantry and gaiety, that Lady Mary raised her eyes. She answered with a smile, and a lively flush animated her beautiful features.

“ Suppose then,” continued the earl, “ that the Comte de Leyris should happen to love you, that you should come to perceive it, and that by a series of attentions on the one side, and the goodness of your heart on the other, you should pardon him—so far even as to repay him with a return of affection—if this misfortune should happen, my dear Mary, what would you do?”

“ I would ask advice of my brother.”

answered the amiable young lady; "he would never wish for any thing but my happiness and repose."

"If you should ask my advice, and Victor loved you, I would advise you to love him; but it would be necessary to be very sure that Victor loved you; and next to you no person can judge better of that matter than myself."

Lady Mary could not refrain from laughing. "Very well, brother!" said she; "I ask your advice."

The earl remained silent for a moment, and then said: "Here we are then; this danger I have dreaded

these two months past. My dear sister, Victor is wise, honourable, and delicate; an amiable disposition, good education, and the natural wit of his nation, are the least of his excellencies."

It is easy to conceive what pleasure this encomium gave to Lady Mary. Wiseby added, with affectionate sensibility: " Victor is thirty-four years of age ; you are nineteen. That mutual friendship which has so long united him and me, stands you in the stead of experience, and abridges to you all those proofs, still so precarious, which are otherwise necessary to enable two lovers to know each other. The attachment, the confidence, of a noble and

ingenuous heart, of a pure and tender soul, cannot be better placed than upon him; my worthy friend would be the man whom I should wish for the husband of my beloved sister.—”

What then must have been the state of Lady Mary, what her sufferings and her fears, when she heard her brother conclude thus: “ I do not wish to afflict you, my dearest Mary, but I shall never give my cordial consent to your marriage.”

At these words, Lady Mary, confounded, overwhelmed with sorrow which she had not the power to express, covered her face with her hands, and

burst into tears. She mistook the intention of her brother, who no doubt was an eccentric character, but one of great sensibility and generosity, who did not wish to afflict her, and whose design it by no means was to present her with a pleasing illusion, in order again to destroy it with a single word. Such a conduct would have been altogether unworthy of him. But his prejudices against that kind of union which his sister was desirous of contracting prescribed to him an oblique mode of proceeding. The good earl wished for nothing more than to reconcile the happiness of his beloved sister with his own peculiar ideas, which led him to adopt an alternative

he had at length discovered as the result of his serious deliberations.

Writers on the theory of the human mind say, that in the brain of a wise man, folly is separated from reason only by a very thin partition. In the understanding, eccentricity is separated from absurdity only by a slight shade of difference. Lord Wiseby was too sensible not to have some suspicion that this was the case ; and it was this judicious instinct that had prevented him from expressing the whole series of his thoughts. Unwilling to prolong the alarms of his sorrowful sister, he hastened to conclude :

“ My dear girl,” said he, while an air of gaiety ill concealed his involuntary embarrassment, “ what I owe to my principles has not made me forget what is required of me by my character of a brother, by my friendship for you, and by your right to my support.”

Here Lady Mary raised her head, which had drooped upon her bosom, moistened with tears, and heaving with sighs. She fixed her eyes upon those of her brother. He embraced her tenderly, and with the most consolatory, friendly, and persuasive tone of voice, proceeded thus :

‘ Let us,” my dear sister, “ reconcile

the law prescribed to me by my principles with the wish of your heart. You wish to marry; you wish it : very well! then let my friend, Count Victor, elope with you, without my being supposed to know any thing of the matter."

At these words, Lady Mary hardly knew whether she was dreaming or not, whether her brother was mocking her, whether she ought to laugh, or to cry at being made a jest of. Lord Wiseby however did not give her time to meditate long upon the various and opposite sensations that were all at once excited in her breast, but proceeded to explain to her his singular and expedient, his extraordinary plan, in short

what he called an alternative that would reconcile every thing.

He told her, that, not wishing to appear in the business, he would not lend her his carriage, but would take care to have one procured for her ; that Victor, at a certain hour and place, should wait for her ; that he himself would conduct her to a small distance from the place of rendezvous, in order to satisfy himself of her safety ; that M. de Leyris and she should then proceed to the borders of Scotland ; that from thence they should send to ask his consent to their marriage, which he would no longer be able to withhold, and for which they should not

have long to wait. At this moment, the amiable Lady Mary cast a tender look at her brother, expressive at once of uneasiness, gratitude, and a sort of compassion for the weakness of this good and amiable brother, who made himself ridiculous for fear of appearing so. She was sensible that he could not concede so much without having had a hard struggle with himself; and for fear of disobliging him, she agreed, as far as regarded herself, to all the conditions he thought fit to prescribe. The earl reserved to himself the fraternal task of procuring Victor's assent to his conciliatory expedient: he rested all his ideas upon grounds sufficiently plausible to leave him no doubt that

they must convince others when once he was convinced of them himself. Lady Mary was very far from being of his opinion. They therefore separated; the one half satisfied, undecided in her wishes and hopes; the other delighted at having found means so ingeniously to reconcile with each other his affection for his sister and his friend, his respect for the public opinion and his immutable principles, by means of his alternative.

CHAP. XII.

THE PLANE TREE.

LORD WISEBY was walking in his park with his sister and his friend: "There," said he, stopping before a magnificent plane tree, "there is a tree which my uncle, from whom I inherit this estate, had planted on the day that I was born." Victor immediately approached, made a sign that he wished not to be followed, and taking a knife, he cut some characters in the smooth bark of the tree. After some minutes, he had finished his work.

“ This tree,” said he to Wiseby, has hitherto served only as a memorial of your birth: I intend that it shall in future serve also to record my gratitude and our friendship.”

The earl advanced and read these words :

18th May, 1781. On this day the Count de Leyris and Lord Milford swore friendship to each other at Venice At some distance beneath was written :

10th March, 1794. On this day the two friends met again in London.—
And still lower down :

12th June. The day on which Wiseby brought Victor back from Colchester.—The earl, deeply affected, pressed the hand of Lady Mary's lover ; and looking at them both with tender affection, he in his turn took up the knife, and wrote :

*Count Victor de Leyris married Lady
Mary Milford the.....*

Victor, transported, threw himself into the arms of Wiseby. Lady Mary remained mute with pleasure ; but this pleasure was not without alloy. She too well foresaw the effect of the explanation that would follow. Her brother continued gravely : “ One

moment, my friend—I have not marked the day. You know me; I am constant; I know what I owe to myself and to others. You will not be surprised that I affix to my consent one single condition; but I must have you know that it is peremptory.”

He pronounced this last word with an emphasis that greatly struck Victor. The earl, in order that he might not leave him in a painful state of suspense, repeated to him what he had said to Lady Mary: in short, he proposed to him his alternative, giving to his opinion all the most plausible supports that it was possible to imagine. Struck with surprise at the view of the extra-

vagances to which the human mind is subject, even in persons of the soundest judgment, M. de Leyris at that moment imagined he beheld a wall of brass arise out of the earth to separate him for ever from his adored mistress. By a word, Lord Wiseby had placed before his eyes the alluring image of bliss : by a word, he caused it to disappear : but the voice of honour rendered Victor insensible to all the allurements of passion. It was in vain to propose to him to take upon himself the mere appearance of blame. It was in vain that he might suppose that the truth would soon come to light, that he would soon be exculpated : it was too much for him to see his reputation

tarnished for a single moment, his delicacy and honour suspected: the affection of Lady Mary, the tacit and secret concurrence of her brother, did not satisfy the generous scrupulosity of his mind. Whatever value he might attach to the happiness of becoming the husband of the lady whom he loved to idolatry, he chose rather to renounce her than to set out with disgracing himself, and disgracing her with him. He therefore did not hesitate, but expressed his refusal, in terms not less frank and honourable than solemn and positive.

Under such circumstances, Lady Mary had no opportunity of offering an advice; and had she been compelled

to do it, she would have found herself under a great embarrassment. Though kind and indulgent, she certainly could not think it a trifle to suffer herself to be eloped with: but here she had nothing to lose in the esteem of her brother, which she valued above every thing; and the more Victor shewed himself worthy of all her tenderness, the more she felt that to be united to him would be to her the summit of felicity. She was therefore silent, listened, and invoked heaven, who remained deaf to her prayers.

Whether Lord Wiseby was convinced by Victor's arguments, or whether he judged that fresh intreaties

on his part would not meet with any better success, he made no further attempt to subdue his obstinacy.

The earl, M. de Leyris, and Lady Mary, walked back in pensive mood to the house, all three with the determination to remain true, Wiseby to his system, Victor to his honour, and Lady Mary to her love.

END OF VOL. II.

